United Nations S/PV.7600

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7600th meeting

Monday, 11 January 2016, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2015/1030)

Letter dated 5 January 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/8)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-00395 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Expression of welcome to new members and of thanks to outgoing members of the Council

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council this year, I should like to extend my warm wishes on the occasion of the New Year to all members of the Security Council, the United Nations and the Secretariat.

In presiding over this first formal meeting of the Council in 2016, I am happy to welcome the other new members: Egypt, Japan, Senegal and Ukraine. We look forward with interest to their participation in the work of the Council. Their experience and wisdom will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities.

I take this opportunity to express the Council's gratitude to the outgoing members, namely, Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania and Nigeria, for their important contributions to the work of the Council during their terms in 2014 and 2015.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like also to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Her Excellency Ms. Samantha Power, Permanent Representative of the United States, for her service as President of the Council for the month of December 2015. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Power and her team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

At the same time, I will very briefly share with the Council some thoughts from our side, since Uruguay has returned to the Council after a 50-year absence and is eager to work actively and closely with all members and the wider membership of the United Nations to achieve the objectives of our Organization.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2015/1030)

Letter dated 5 January 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/8)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mali.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/1030, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali. I wish also to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/8, which contains a letter dated 5 January 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by reiterating to you, Mr. President, and to other members my warmest congratulations on acceding to the Security Council. I am pleased at the prospect of what I am certain will be a fruitful collaboration.

I am pleased also to present the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2015/1030) and the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I welcome the presence here of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, and I would like to express to him once again the deep appreciation of my Department for the excellent relations between his Government and MINUSMA.

Since the most recent consultations, held in October last, the situation in Mali has evolved considerably. The joint efforts of the Malian authorities, the signatory parties, the international mediation and MINUSMA, inter alia, have enabled us to strengthen the dynamic of dialogue and coordination among the Government, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition. Indeed, the Government has launched a series of confidence-building measures, inter alia, the release of persons detained as a result of the conflict, and the meeting held on 23 September last year between President Keita and the representatives of the armed groups of the Coordination and the Platform, which helped to ease the situation between the parties and led to an effective cessation of the hostilities. The rapprochement between the Coordination and

the Platform has also helped to create an environment more conducive to the effective functioning of the mechanisms for monitoring the Agreement — the Comité de suivi de l'accord (CSA) and the Commission technique mixte de sécurité — which have met four times since the last Council meeting on this item (see S/PV.7528).

Allow me to highlight in that regard the particularly important role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mongi Hamdi, who facilitated the rapprochement between the two movements, particularly during the Bamako meeting on 23 September. In addition, under his leadership, MINUSMA has continued to assist the support and monitoring mechanisms of the Agreement. In addition to backing the secretariat of the CSA, the Mission has placed experts at the disposal of each of its subcommittees to support their work. The Force Commander, who chairs the Commission technique mixte de sécurité, has played an equally important role in advancing the implementation of the cantonment, including through the identification of sites, the activation of joint patrols and the establishment of the operational coordination mechanism.

I am confident that the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Annadif, who is also present in the Chamber, will work to maintain the good offices and support of MINUSMA for the peace process.

While the monitoring bodies may be functional, that has not yet fully translated into tangible progress towards the implementation of the Agreement. The process has continued to encounter often significant delays. There has been positive progress with the validation of 11 cantonment sites, the launch of construction works for two of them — work on the third will begin in four days once the site has been demined — and the adoption of decrees on 29 December establishing the national commissions on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and on integration. Regrettably, only one mixed patrol has been conducted to date, on 14 November, and none since. Another positive measure was the inauguration of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, but we remain concerned that other political and institutional reforms that underpin the peace agreements are yet to be implemented.

These delays, if not addressed as soon as possible, bear the potential to unravel the hard-won confidence built to date between the signatory parties, as illustrated by the concerns expressed by the Coordination and the Platform in the latest meeting of the CSA, on 17 and 18 December. We welcome in that context the consultative meeting of the members of the CSA to be convened at the ministerial level in Algiers on 18 January, and hope that it will contribute to addressing these scheduling concerns and set new timelines for implementing outstanding reforms.

The first priority in that regard, I believe, should be the introduction of the interim administrative arrangements on which the resumption of basic services to the populations in the North depends. We understand that the parties have agreed in principle to establish temporary councils at the regional and local levels, and it is our hope that the Government and the Parliament will ensure that these structures are established as soon as possible. Moreover, it is important for the parties to prepare for the local elections, which Council members will recall were postponed in October, and to revise the electoral law, as also provided for in the Agreement. In the long term, the Government will have to turn its attention to institutional reforms, starting with the creation of the the two new regions of Taoudeni and Ménaka, and initiate the necessary consultations on the institutional reforms related to decentralization.

The Malian Government and Parliament must continue to take the lead in advancing the implementation of these reforms in a consistently inclusive and consultative manner. In this regard, we welcome the announcement by the Government that the national committee of coordination for the implementation of the peace agreement will include representatives designated by the signatory parties. We call on the movements to designate their representatives to these structures without delay, as time is of the essence if we wish to advance on the key processes of cantonment; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and security sector reform. If all of this is to gain momentum, the work of the recently created national commission on integration will be crucial, and it is our hope that we move forward to that end.

One lesson from the past six months is that the various pillars of the Agreement are extremely interrelated, and their implementation will therefore need to take place in a parallel and synchronized manner. MINUSMA will continue to play its full role in exercising its good offices in building trust between the parties and advocating inclusivity in the peace process.

However, as we all know, there will be no lasting peace in northern Mali without the provision of peace dividends to the most vulnerable. In that regard, it will be recalled that the major meeting of international partners in Paris in October pledged over €3.2 billion for the reconstruction and development of Mali. Some progress has already been made on the ground, notably in the field of education, thanks to the good cooperation between the Government and the humanitarian actors, including for the symbolic reopening of the schools. In the three northern regions, 89 per cent of the schools that were operating before the crisis are again functional, but we note that in the areas most affected by insecurity, one in five schools remains closed due to the absence of teachers, materials, facilities and infrastructure.

Since June, MINUSMA has scaled up its support for communities in the north by 30 per cent, supporting 36 new quick-impact projects at a cost of approximately $1.3 million. New projects include the provision of drinking water in the Kidal region, equipment for health centres in Kidal and Mopti, the refurbishment of social care centres in Gao and social reintegration projects for women, young people and internally displaced persons in all the major municipalties of the north. But we must continue to do more, and we hope that the Government and the movements will soon finalize a development development strategy for the north, in accordance with Agreement and the commitment made at the Paris conference.

If I insist so strongly on the urgent need to address these challenges at the political, security and humanitarian levels, it is essentially because the peace process in Mali remains fragile and faces enormous hurdles. Recent months have shown the determination of extremist groups to derail the peace process. Members are no doubt aware of the statements issued in October and December by the leaders of the terrorist group Ansar Dine condemning the peace process, denouncing the armed groups signatories the Algiers Agreement, and threatening to step up attacks against France and its allies. That is the expression they use, which is meant to cover both the Malian Government and MINUSMA.

Extremist groups have continued to intimidate people and attack the Malian armed forces, Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA, not only in north Mali but also in the centre and south of the country. Armed groups that are themselves signatories of the Agreement have also been targeted. For example, I would mention what happened on 24 and 25 December when Ansar Dine caused 15 casualties among the ranks of the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, including Bilal Ag Cherif's own brother. It is clear that it is the peace process itself that is at issue. The Council had not failed to note that the attack against the Radisson Blu in Bamako occurred while the Comité de suivi de l'accord was holding meetings in Bamako, and that the hotel was the precise location of where the Algerian delegation — Algeria is the Chair of the CSA — was staying.

Our convoys and camps also remain prime targets for extremist groups. During the period covered by the report, the Force suffered no less than 28 attacks, in contrast to the 20 attacks registered in the previous three months. On 28 November, a clear night, in fact a moonlit night, six rockets hit our base, killing two of our peacekeepers and a contractor. Faced with this situation, it should be known and said that two thirds of MINUSMA's personnel — with 94 per cent of the authorized military staff deployed — are employed solely to protect MINUMSMA's installations and convoys. Hardly a day goes by without improvised explosive devices damaging our armoured vehicles, which are already in short supply, thereby reducing the Mission's ability to fulfil its mandate. Despite repeated appeals, we still are finding it difficult to set up the combat logistics battalion that would partly solve this problem.

In those circumstances, it must be reiterated, it is urgent to implement all the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. Only the operationalization of joint patrols and quartering could possibly reverse the security dynamic, and even if, it should always be remembered, the roots of the conflict are political, there will be no lasting solution without the political and institutional reforms envisaged in the Agreement.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin my statement, Mr. President, by reiterating the delegation of Mali's warm congratulations to your country, the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, on its election, on 16 October 2015, to the Security Council as a non-permanent member. It is a particular pleasure for me to see you, Sir, preside over the Security Council

in January 2016, coincidentally with the start of your country's term on this important organ dedicated to the maintenance of international peace and security.

I would also like to express the delegation of Mali's appreciation for the outstanding way in which the United States of America led the work of the Security Council last month, with, in particular, the adoption of important resolutions, including resolution 2253 (2015), on Daesh, and resolution 2258 (2015), on Syria.

I would also like to reiterate my delegation's congratulations to Egypt, Senegal, Japan and Ukraine on their elections as non-permanent members of the Security Council. The delegation of Mali would like to assure all the new members of its full and complete cooperation.

I would also like to commend Chile, Jordan, Lithuania, Nigeria and Chad, whose mandates ended on 31 December, and to express our appreciation for the extremely important role they have played in the Security Council with respect to resolving the multidimensional crisis that has affected my country, Mali, since 2012.

On behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, as well as the people and the Government of Mali, I would like to pay tribute to all the members of the Security Council, non-permanent and permanent alike, and to the entire international community for their support and spirit of solidarity, from which my country has benefited during this crisis.

I would also like to reiterate our deep gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to Algeria, head of the international mediation team and Chair of the Monitoring Committee for the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, to the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, France, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Nigeria, the Niger and the United States of America, which have spared no effort to restore peace and stability in Mali.

I would also like to bow reverently in memory of all the victims — civilian and military, foreign and Malian — who have lost their lives during the crisis in Mali and express our deep appreciation to the United Nations and the troop-contributing countries for all the sacrifices they have made.

The delegation of Mali thanks our dear friend Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2015/1030), which we applaud for its balanced character, its analysis of the situation on the ground and its acknowledgment of all the efforts made by the Malians — their Government, armed forces and population in general — but also its recognition of the important challenges and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Agreement. I thank Mr. Ladsous for the report.

Before going any further, I would like to make some preliminary remarks.

First, the determination of the Government of Mali to implement the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is firm and total. In that context, my delegation welcomes the positive momentum initiated in recent months by signatory movements that have set aside their differences.

Secondly, we must take note of the resurgence in terrorist attacks as the main obstacle to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Terrorist groups have retaken the field and are now acting openly to intimidate communities and extending their actions to reach strategic targets, including hotels, as seen in, inter alia, the deadly attacks at the Byblos Hotel in Sévaré and the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako.

Thirdly, as mentioned previously, I would like to draw attention to the significant progress made in the implementation of the Agreement under the leadership of President Keita, despite the difficulties encountered, which are inherent in any process of this nature.

It should be recalled that, at the 6 October 2015 meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.7528), the delegation of Mali informed the Council of the actions and initiatives its Government had undertaken in the framework of the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. These actions and initiatives continued with the support of our partners. In July, the Government prepared and submitted a plan of action, which has become the document of reference for the implementation of the Agreement. It contains a precise timetable. I am therefore pleased to add to the list of institutional actions and measures taken by Mali, which Mr. Ladsous previously reported, as follows.

In the area of economic, social and cultural development, pursuant to the Agreement, the international conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali was held on 22 October 2015 in Paris, under the joint auspices of the Government of Mali and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It was attended by representatives of the parties signatory to the Agreement, civil society, the Malian and international private sector and 64 partner countries and organizations. The opening ceremony was chaired jointly by the Heads of State of Mali and France and the Secretary-General of the OECD.

At that meeting, the Government of Mali expressed its determination to create the conditions needed to speed up growth throughout Mali and, first of all, reaffirmed its commitment to implementing a decentralization process giving the regions responsibilities and effective control of local issues and regional development. It presented the outline for a specific development strategy for the country's northern regions, as recommended in the Agreement, and announced a contribution from the Government's own resources of €451 million for the period 2016 to 2018. In addition, the Government announced the establishment of a sustainable development fund as provided for in the Agreement, which will be administered under joint and inclusive oversight and will conform to the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

The international conference for Mali's economic recovery and development was an opportunity to take stock of Mali's partners' financial pledges, which, as was just mentioned, represent a commitment of €3.2 billion for the period 2015 to 2017, including €596 million for the northern regions, based on the first announcements made during the conference. I should point out that the overall cost of the early recovery activities, poverty-reduction and development has been assessed at about €3.5 billion. I should like take this opportunity to thank all of Mali's partners, and the United Nations in particular, for mobilizing their support and commitment.

In the area of infrastructure development, the Government has already conducted an assessment of road infrastructure needs and is working to mobilize the financial resources needed for them. In that regard, I would like to note that financing is in place for the strategically important Gao-Bourem-Taoussa road, while the Kidal-Bourem section is partially funded.

Concerning basic social services, the Government has launched various efforts on the humanitarian emergency front. In the past few months we have prioritized the areas of anti-malaria response and education, for which a Government assessment team has been out in the field organizing the opening of classes, which have now begun in Kidal. We have also distributed kits to students in some schools in the Kidal region. After an absence of several years, the national electricity company, with the help and cooperation of the signatory armed groups, has installed generators in Kidal and Ménaka, and the electricity is back on. We must note that the regrettable lack of cooperation on the part of some of the signatory movements, particularly their occupation of classrooms, has interfered slightly with the smooth running of the process, but the work in this area continues.

The support arrangements consist essentially of the Comité de suivi de l'accord and its subcommittees, which are already in place and holding meetings regularly. However, the Government of Mali regrets the delays and inefficiencies in the work of that body, which has too often wasted too much time on procedural and representational questions.

On the political and institutional front, besides the measures noted in the Secretary-General's report, it should be recalled that, at the request of the Head of State, the Government has established a ministerial department dedicated to State decentralization and reform. The department is led by a native of Kidal who is familiar with the challenges that those regions are dealing with and of the importance of acting as quickly as possible to institute political and institutional reforms. A detailed plan has been drawn up in accordance both with the Government's plan of action and the timetable for implementation of the Agreement. The start of the new year is the right time for us to start to operationalize this extremely vital job.

We have also established a national coordination committee for implementing the Agreement, led by the Prime Minister and Head of Government, with the assistance of a technical secretariat. I should note here that the committee and its technical secretariat have been set up in order to help to ensure national ownership of the process by Malians and the Malian Government. The mechanism, which, as Mr. Ladsous indicated, is open to the signatory groups, will work closely with the Comité de suivi de l'accord. The Government of Mali and its technical and financial partners have also

set up a consultation mechanism designed to ensure the best possible and most transparent management of the resources for implementing the Agreement. Its first meeting took place on 24 December.

With regard to reconciliation, justice and humanitarian efforts, the main achievements in this area have been the communal dialogues, all part of a process of reconciliation between communities at the base. Since the Anéfis initiative, in which the Government played a major role and which encouraged a rapprochement and lessening of tensions among the groups, these activities have multiplied on the ground. It is also important to note that the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission has been set up and its operationalization problems resolved. In that regard, on 23 December, the Council of Ministers of the issued a decree authorizing the Commission's expansion with a view to ensuring its inclusivity.

Where defence and security are concerned, in general, the overall security situation on the ground is somewhat improved, thanks mainly to the cessation of hostilities between the parties and to the messages of peace and support to the Agreement issued regularly by all the parties. The Commission technique de sécurité provided for in the Agreement has been set up and is meeting regularly. However, the Mécanisme opérationnel de coordination is not yet operational, despite the resources that the Government has made available to it in order to speed things up. It would therefore be highly desirable to see the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) become more involved in operationalizing the joint Mécanisme opérationnel.

With regard to the commissions on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), on 29 December, as was noted just now, the Council of Ministers issued a decree on the creation, organization and operating procedures of a national commission for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, along with a similar decree for an integration commission. The texts were produced following a workshop on a draft document for a comprehensive DDR strategy and operational texts organized by the Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants, with, I should emphasize, the participation of representatives of the signatory movements. The cantonment phase, according to the Government's concept and wishes, provides for cantonment with all basic amenities. In that regard, I would like to draw the Security Council's attention to the need to speed up the cantonment process, as was also noted just now, and to urge MINUSMA to play its full part in that process and to induce the armed groups to cooperate in order to ensure that the operation is conducted successfully and on time.

Where the joint patrols are concerned, the Government of Mali was pleased with the first operation, which was carried out in November. Once again, however, we share Mr. Ladsous's opinion that more are needed. It is even more important that the Malian armed forces and MINUSMA work together to ensure better securitization of these communities. Unfortunately we find even more regrettable the lack of cooperation on the part of our brothers in the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, who claim to have neither the heavy weapons or the vehicles needed to continue with the joint patrols. However, to some extent the Government has the means to enable it to do this itself.

As we can see, tangible progress has been made by the Government in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. However, a number of persistent challenges, in particular the threat linked to the presence of terrorist groups in northern Mali, both worries us and calls for our attention. The threat is real and constitutes the main challenge to the return of peace in Mali today. Indeed, the resurgence of terrorist activities in the north of the country is clearly aimed at halting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation and at creating alarm within the business and investment communities, whose interest in Mali — the promise of which had been renewed following the successful Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development meeting in Paris on the country's economic recovery — had fortunately been rekindled. That is the nefarious objective of the terrorist group Ansar Dine, which has been inscribed on the sanctions list of the Security Council, as well as of its partners in the Front de libération du Macina and other terrorist groups, such as the Organization of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Mourabitoun, that have claimed responsibility for a series of terrorist acts that have regrettably plunged our country and many other friendly nations into mourning.

That was the case, for example on Friday, 20 November 2015, when fanatics from a bygone era, fiercely determined to commit a heinous massacre, attacked the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako. Sadly, friends of Mali of various nationalities lost their lives in

that tragedy. Recalling those painful events, allow me to once again express the most heartfelt condolences of the people and Government of Mali to the bereaved families and nations. As the President of the Republic, Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, recalled, the reopening of the Radisson Blu Hotel on 15 December 2015 was a global symbol of resilience and rejection of terror.

The Government of Mali is fully aware that peacekeeping operations are not mandated to combat terrorism. Unfortunately, it is clear that MINUSMA now operates in an environment marked by the presence and activities of terrorist groups. In the framework of their State functions, it should be recalled that the Malian defence and security forces are on the front line in the fight against terrorism. However, given the vastness of the country and the asymmetrical nature of this war, they cannot cope with this phenomenon alone.

Today, 11 January, which marks the third anniversary of the launch of Operation Serval, provides us with the opportunity to reiterate our appreciation to France not only for its life-saving intervention in Mali, but also for the remarkable work accomplished by the Barkhane force in the fight against terrorism.

Given the persistence of the terrorist threat, I once again invite the Security Council to consider, in the framework of the review of the mandate of MINUSMA, strengthening its operational capacity with a view to adapting it to the particularly fluid and evolving security environment. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, there is concern that

> "MINUSMA is likely to continue to face significant security challenges posed by actors outside the peace process, namely, extremist and terrorist groups and transnational drug traffickers" (*S/2015/1030, para. 60*).

In the light of this situation, which poses a threat to international peace and security, I reiterate the desire expressed many times by the Heads of State and Governments of African regional and subregional entities to establish a rapid intervention force to combat terrorism by pooling the efforts of countries of the region. Our concern is all the greater as we fear unrest throughout the region due to interaction, or even possible cooperation between the various terrorist groups operating in the Sahel, in particular in northern Mali — several of which I have just mentioned — as well as in Libya, where the presence of the Islamic State is now a reality, and in the Lake Chad Basin, where Boko Haram conducts its deadly operations.

We must take the threat of terrorism in the Sahel region very seriously. Being selective in our fight against terrorism would be a grave mistake. Acts of terrorism of any kind are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of the motivation, time or place of commission, or the perpetrators. That is why the delegation of Mali welcomed the 17 December 2015 adoption of resolution 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, inter alia, and invites the Security Council to consider taking stronger measures against the terrorist groups operating in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

The obscurantists who attacked the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako; who took so many lives at the Bataclan in Paris; who wrought havoc in San Bernardino, California; and who have claimed so many innocent victims elsewhere around the world are, unfortunately, all driven by the same ideology of hatred that would subject human beings to an inhumane order. These lawless, faithless individuals have nothing to do with the religion of Muhammad, which is above all a religion of peace, humanism, respect for others and peaceful coexistence among people that advocates the preservation of the sacred nature of of humankind and human life. We are of the firm conviction that nothing, absolutely nothing, can justify terrorism. No cause can justify this scourge, which has no country, religion or border. We must show exemplary solidarity and unity in the face of this phenomenon. Only then will we be able to proclaim loudly that terror will not triumph. We are convinced that, united, we will defeat terrorism.

I cannot conclude without thanking my friend, Mr. Mongi Hamdi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSMA, who is about to step down from his position after a year of intense activity that culminated in the conclusion of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, among others. I commend him for the work he has accomplished as Head of MINUSMA and wish him, on behalf of the Government of Mali, every success in his new role.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate my brother and friend, Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, a seasoned diplomat with extensive peacekeeping experience, on his selection to head MINUSMA. I express the full readiness of the Government of Mali to work with him on the

accelerated implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and, above all, on ensuring the success of his mission, which is of necessity the success of the Malian people.

As 2016 begins, I would like to wish the members of the Security Council a happy new year. May this new year see the efforts of the international community in its fight against terrorism and the restoration of peace and stability in the world, be crowned with success.

Finally, on quite another matter, in the light of all the advances made in my country thanks to the presence of the United Nations Mission, I would like to invite the Security Council to request the Secretariat to conduct an in-depth study with a view to the development of a exit strategy for MINUSMA. This is not premature. We believe that any operation should allow for the consideration of an eventual exit. Beginning to reflect on the matter now would allow us to better to assess what capacities to develop, what resources to make available, and what strategies to employ to ensure a much faster transition to the Malian defence and security forces.

The idea is to gradually draw down MINUSMA as a number of milestones are reached. It will then gradually be replaced by the State and its rebuilt defence and security forces within the framework of our sovereign mission to ensure peace and stability in our country. That is the objective that we wish to share with the Council in an effort to offer constructive inputs as we look towards the future. Once again, we wish to express our tremendous gratitude for all the efforts that have been made and continue to be made to help our country. As partners and friends, we believe that it is important for us to think ahead about the ways in which we can best support the efforts being made to assist Mali.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite Council members to hold informal consultations to continue the discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.